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Arts & Education  
ISSUE 4 SPRING/SUMMER 2013

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SCHOOLS  
SHOULD BE  
- ART -  
SCHOOLS

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# Editorial

## Henry Ward

We are living in unprecedented times with regards to educational reform. Back in September 2012 the education secretary, Michael Gove, announced his plans to scrap GCSEs in the wake of the latest scandal, this time over English examinations last summer. He wanted to introduce an entirely new qualification, the English Baccalaureate Certificate (EBC), which, he claimed, would reinstate the missing rigour and respect that GCSEs no longer had. His focus was on a core of 'academic' subjects; English, maths, the sciences, history, geography and languages. There was no room for the arts. Whilst this announcement was merely a proposal it took very little time for schools to respond by making sweeping changes to their curriculums. Many schools cut their arts offer at key stage 4 (students aged 14-16) and some even began to strip back arts provision with younger students.

There was another consequence to Gove's announcements, one that, I doubt, he anticipated. When Gove picked a fight with the arts he stirred a body of people into action who had, to all intents and purposes, lain dormant for a significant number of years. Suddenly people started talking about the importance of the arts within the curriculum, not just that they should be included but that, if we were to have this new measure, the arts should be the 'sixth pillar'. That, alongside English, maths, science, humanities and languages, we should add arts. Until he picked this fight, no one had been talking about making the arts compulsory at key stage 4. Now there was a growing body of opinion that we should do so.

Figures from education and industry spoke out against the government plans. Great Britain has a phenomenal worldwide reputation for excellence in the creative industries and there was concern that Gove's plans would decimate this, stunting the development of generations to come by excluding the arts from their education. The battle lines were drawn and

bodies such as the Cultural Learning Alliance and the National Society for Education in Art and Design met with the government to argue the case for the inclusion of the arts.

But we do need to ask the questions: Why should they be included? Why are the arts an important element in a curriculum? What do they contribute? When something is threatened with extinction we start to think about what its absence might come to mean and, only then, do we begin to develop an understanding of its potential importance.

Back in October 2012 I was invited to speak on a panel discussion, as part of the Cubitt Gallery's Festival of Blackboards, the purpose of which was to discuss the proposed changes and why the arts were an important part of the curriculum. What became evident during the course of the evening was the difficulty we have in defining what the arts do, or have the potential to do, within schools. Too often the typical statement justifying their inclusion talks about the need for students to have cultural experiences, or, worse still, that the subjects are important because students 'enjoy' the arts. Can we imagine the argument for the inclusion of maths because students 'enjoy' it? It seems vital that we start to argue for the inclusion of arts for the same reason that we would argue for the inclusion of maths or English or the sciences. That they are essential. That they provide a forum in which students can build the skills to ask questions and to develop oracy and understanding. There is no doubt that the arts have the potential to do this and that, in the very best examples, they provide just such opportunities for students; where the art room becomes a place where investigations and discoveries can take place. But too much art education is still focused on the learning of a particular skill, is too easily dismissed as a 'hobby' subject, a welcome relief from the rigour of the academic. In such a climate it is no wonder that Gove, and his fellow reformists, see it as an option that is, too easily, to be swept under the carpet.

But of course, as with anything, ideas about art and education are full of contradictions. In fact

one of the reasons that art is such an important part of the school curriculum is because of its potential to raise these contradictions and incite discussion and argument. Having argued, above, that art in education is not about enjoying the subject, John Baldessari, in the interview with him in this issue, discusses the importance of enjoyment in relation to teaching art. Alongside this we include another interview with the contemporary British artist Jeremy Deller, renowned for his socially engaged projects. In an issue which, unashamedly, celebrates the work that we do here at Welling School we include articles by Layla Fay, an ex-student, writing about her memories of her art education and Cassie Hyland raising the issue of school display. We also showcase examples of work currently being made by students, staff and alumni of Welling School. In the temperamental climate in which we are currently existing, models of educational practice that celebrate the arts and place them at the centre of their philosophies, as we do at Welling School, are even more important.

All is certainly not lost. Incredibly, and very much against character, Gove announced a U-turn over GCSE reform at the beginning of February 2013. He acknowledged that his ideas had been a step too far, has scrapped his plans to eject the GCSE and has proposed a new measure that will enable schools to continue delivering the arts subjects and have them included in the results that they publish. I would imagine that those schools that rushed to scrap their arts provision, making art teachers redundant and putting their resources elsewhere, are now having second thoughts. We seem to be edging back towards an understanding that a broad and balanced curriculum, a very worthy ideal, does include the arts.

But behind the scenes other measures are being quietly introduced that can still be seen as an attack on the arts subjects. Subject codes, which are used to measure a school's performance in league tables, have been changed so that subjects such as dance and drama no longer count as separate GCSEs. The

same is now true of all the different disciplines within the visual arts. The changes are with immediate effect and have happened with little fuss. Unlike the proposed EBCs, which grabbed the public attention and newspaper headlines, these code changes have gone unnoticed. A much more insidious approach, and a far more dangerous one.

So whilst it feels as though one battle has been won it is not time to be complacent. Having woken up to the need to argue for the inclusion of the arts we must push on to develop the subjects further, to truly recognise what they potentially bring to the curriculum and to enable all schools to realise this potential and move away from the over reliance on the 'hobby' aspects of the subject. Our goal must be to have the arts recognised as equally important as maths, English and science. Perhaps we do need a return to a renaissance ideal of education.



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# Making Time for Making Art

Susan Coles

I have a very interesting life in the world of art and design education, and I have never regretted the fact that so much of my life and time has been about this one all consuming passion.

My weeks are full of creative fun through workshops run with teachers, with learners of all ages, with advocacy for our subject, with visiting schools, with working in galleries, with giving curriculum advice, and with staring out of train windows and absorbing in all that visual information which lies in the great British countryside. I do much of my thinking on train journeys.

So, recently, an art teacher said to me "When do you have time for yourself?" and I was stumped to give an answer. After I completed the Artist Teacher MA (Northumbria University and the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art partnership) in 2009, my cohort and I carried on making art and had a group show in 2011. We called it "In Spite Of..." - simply because we were proud to be still creating art despite all our other pressures. Since then though, we are starting to drift apart and I'm starting to wonder when my "making art" time is going to come back.

My work with teachers and schools allows me to see exactly what the pressures are on the day to day events and demands. When I run my courses, people are relieved to be away from the classroom to have time to "sharpen

the saw", but they almost feel guilt at doing so. There is also guilt in not being able to say that you are still an artist. (Although it seems to me that making art in the classroom with young learners is being an artist!)

As well as being part of NSEAD, I am an Associate of the Big Draw (Campaign for Drawing). So, I was pretty chuffed to be invited to facilitate (alongside Eileen Adams) the national TEA (Thinking, Drawing, Expression) CPD Drawing programme for secondary art teachers. To see where this began, you need to visit this link: [http://www.nsead.org/downloads/TEA\\_invitation.pdf](http://www.nsead.org/downloads/TEA_invitation.pdf)

Now, part of my role in this project is to bring people together via social media platforms and we have over 60% of the group who are very active with this. I wanted to start them off (in July) with a quick drawing challenge, just to draw on the back on an envelope and upload the image to a Facebook page. I wondered if anyone would join in. They did. I did. I drew all summer. We generated hundreds of artworks. Members of the group started mail art projects which saw collaborative drawing projects going around the country from person to person, there were six mail art projects in the summer months. The images online grew so fast that we had to set up a flickr page to host them.

Once back at school in September, the enthusiasm did not stop. Many teachers used

our summer art work as a starting point for class projects. Schools started cross school projects, one class starting some work which was sent to another school and then returned. Karen Wick's (Ilfracome Arts College) brought people together with sketch pads which are still travelling the country from school to school and class to class. Elinor Brass (Eltham College) has started 25 of us off on a Sketchbook Circle which will be at least a year of teacher educators swapping sketchbooks by mail. Georgia Nash (Sandbach School) has just started us off on the "TEA Bag" collaborative drawing project- paper bags arrive in your post- you respond to that theme of "TEA" bags and send back to her, her pupils are responding to those and then their work will be relayed to us.

Every single day bring something new. The two Facebook pages are closed ones, which I feel gives people "space" to talk. Every day someone posts up either a project they have done at school or some of their own art work. The page becomes an area for critique and for questions and for encouragement.

It's a very non judgemental community too, you do as much or as little as you want. You work around your workload. And, up and down the country, as I write, there are people balancing cups of tea on their knees whilst scribbling away in a sketch book, on a paper bag, on the back of an envelope and having a very nice time. I have had many affirmative messages from participants to say that it has brought

back their art practice. You really can't ask for more than that.

But, to go back to me and my answer to that teacher's question, I am now drawing again like I did a decade ago. Sometimes for sheer pleasure, sometimes to develop an idea or a concept, sometimes because I feel it keeps me sane. I moved away from drawing for my MA, specialising in Photography. I am still taking photos but I am also now seeing that drawing and its ability to engage me in observation and narrative is what my Photography is also about.

But, the community of art educators involved in this have a very strong feeling of identity as a group, which will grow and grow. We will also share the project at two forthcoming National Conferences, in an online archive and, amazingly, at our very own exhibition in 2014.

We have created so much to see that I can't even keep up with the flickr page, nor can I keep the "archive" up to date because new stuff comes out EVERY day-but who cares? At the end of the day it isn't about that, it really is just about what those people have gained for themselves. The time and the space to do what they were born to do, to make art. As Germaine Greer wrote: "Art is a part of life, but in order to be art it has to create for itself a separate zone, what we might call the art space or the art time."

# Telephone Conversation Between John Baldessari and Henry Ward

- JB – Hello?
- HW – Hello, is that John Baldessari?
- JB – This is he.
- HW – Hi John, it's Henry Ward here, calling from London....
- JB – Oh hi yes, I was expecting your call.
- HW – It's ok to talk?
- JB – Yeah, that's fine.
- HW – I have some questions, I did email them through. I don't know if you've had the opportunity to look through them?
- JB – Yes, yes I did.
- HW – Ok. So if I can run through these? I really appreciate you doing this.
- JB – Sure, sure.
- HW – When did you first decide, or realise , that you wanted to be an artist?
- JB – Um, I think it happened when I, let me see, I was teaching juvenile delinquents and I saw they had a greater need for art than I did and I said, you know here are criminals, that I had nothing to do with , and they need art more than I do. So I thought art was kind of masturbatory, it didn't help anybody, I didn't have a kind of social conscience at the time. I didn't think art did any good, but you know that changed my mind. I thought, art must be useful somehow and I think that was it.
- HW – So do you think that, it's really interesting, in a way it was teaching it that suggested a meaning for it?
- JB – Well, you know, I read all your questions and you have a heavy emphasis on teaching art?
- HW – Yes.
- JB – I think what's important is, I didn't teach by choice. I had to support myself.
- HW – Yes.
- JB – I did it to make a living.
- HW – Absolutely.
- JB – It was the closest thing to making art, I mean teaching art, you know, I mean instead of working in an automobile factory or whatever.
- I mean I don't want to sound too noble about it. It was a way of supporting myself.
- HW – Was that your first experience of teaching, working with the juvenile delinquents?
- JB – No, no, my first experience of teaching was when I was in college and one of my art instructors got ill and he recommended that I teach his course, which I did, and that was my first experience teaching.
- HW – Brilliant, ok, thank you. You've had a tremendous effect on many of your students that have gone off to become important artists in their own right. How do you see the role of the teacher of art in relation to the development of someone else's practice?
- JB – Um, that's a tough one, because I think, first of all, that the student is the one that decides if they're going to go to an art school or college or whatever, so I have no control over that, it's just someone decides to do that. And then I try to make it, my approach, and again this was kind of selfish, I'd just try to make it as much fun for me as possible. And so I'd figure well I'm having fun then probably the students are, hopefully, they're having fun and art should be about having fun.
- HW – Yes.
- JB – And somehow the equation works.
- HW – Ok. I love the idea of that. I think it's brilliant to hear the idea of the fun element, that's so important, in education generally but particularly in art I think.
- JB – Well I think, I know, one of my guidelines was I just decided to not do anything I thought was bad about teaching; so, like lecturing, I think lecturing does no good, and don't just come in and read your notes and walk out, because, I mean, your students could read them so they don't need that. So you sort of correct all the things that were bad and happened in your education and that's a good way to start.
- HW – That's cool. I like that. Much of your teaching appears to have utilised the instructional. There are also many elements of this in your own practice. Do you think there's an argument that all art is educational?
- JB – Yes, of course. I think that's a given, I mean you learn all your waking hours. So then looking at art, of course, you're learning something then. Yes, exactly.
- HW – I am particularly interested in the way in which a lot of your early work seems to directly relate to your role as a teacher; video pieces like "Baldessari Sings Sol Lewitt" and so on, do you think having a focus on teaching meant that you approached, at that point in your career, making art in a different way from the way you might approach it if you're in a studio working?
- JB – Well what you said there; you said 'having a focus on teaching', I didn't have a focus on teaching, it was just to support myself. My focus was on making art.
- HW – So, ok, so would it be that because your focus was on making art but you found yourself in that role, as you say to financially, it was imperative that you did it, did that change in any way the way in which you approached things? I just wondered because some of those very early video pieces in particular, I watched a documentary recently about you where some of the students were talking about you making those things alongside them or actually in the classroom so to speak, and I was interested in whether that changed the way in which you approached things at all when you were working within that role or whether it was all the same thing?
- JB – I think it's all the same thing. I think, that particular piece it wouldn't have happened if I had not been teaching at CalArts because we had a lot, we had something like 26 Sony PortaPak video cameras and so I had access to the equipment and so I was able to do that. Now if I'd been on my own, you know I didn't have any money to rent out equipment or to buy equipment so that wouldn't have happened. I can say that.
- HW – Yes. So you think it was purely a logistical thing; the space was there; the equipment was there so you could utilise it in that way? Rather than, necessarily, a conceptual difference?
- JB – Yes, I remember very succinctly, very accurately, it was a Sunday afternoon and I was kind of bored, and I drove out to school, and into the classroom that I used and I decided that my Sunday I would spend making videos. That's it. I never saw it as being very important, it was just, you know, trying to escape boredom. I think that's always been one of my reasons for doing art. I think it applies. You know, we try to escape boredom. That's why we do art.
- HW – Ok. I like that. I'm interested in, I really like, a lot of those early video pieces in particular....
- JB – Thank you.
- HW – I think there's something really interesting about the way in which they may be viewed differently as time progresses as well and I wondered, do you think, on the documentary I referred to I heard students talking about them and I'm assuming that you did use your work almost as a teaching resource, I don't know whether that's the right term, but where you might show things you were doing, to students, and that would kind of be a starting point? You said about showing things you were interested in or.....
- JB – Well I didn't show finished...I didn't say "you know, look at my work"...
- HW – No.
- JB – I didn't show them slides, but you know I think the way I approached it was to treat them as young artists rather than students and they would show me work they were working on, I would show them work I was working on, and sometimes I would help them on their work, they would help me on my work, so it was almost like a big collaboration in some way. The only difference was that I was older and they were younger.
- HW – Yes. But in terms of, that's a fantastic thing the approach of 'they're already artists'. I teach 11 – 18 year olds and that's always been my idea that at 11 years old they're an artist, at 18 years old they're an artist, the way they make work at that age is the way they make work, it's just up for discussion....
- JB – Yes.
- HW – We just talk about things, and I think it's refreshing. It's an exciting way to look at things. Again in that documentary the students were talking about a John Baldessari class being a lot of sitting around talking about stuff and people showing stuff and I really like that idea.
- JB – Yeah well the metaphor I always use is that there has to be a wall between you and the students but you can keep the wall as low as you possibly can.
- HW – That's really nice. So when did you retire from teaching? I know you left CalArts in 1986 was it but....
- JB – Yeah I got a Guggenheim fellowship so I was able to, you know in the mid eighties money started to come into the art market and my gallery started to sell some of my work so I was able to stop teaching. And then some years later the market took a dip again and I taught half-time at the University of California

“I don't think art can be taught, but I think a situation can be created where art might happen.”

in San Diego, at Los Angeles, UCLA. Then when things got better I left again. So I haven't taught for maybe 10 years.

HW – So do you think since, in the last 10 years, do you think your approach to the way you do things has changed, or perhaps it hasn't, in respect to what you said earlier?

JB – I don't think I've changed.

HW – The way you go about things is still the same way. Ok. One of the things I was interested in; you were really influential when you were at CalArts, not just in your teaching but also in the way that ended up gathering a team of people around you that were interesting.....

JB – Yes, yes.

HW – I read somewhere that you described your role as a bit like 'Cupid', kind of putting people together and seeing what happened, could you expand a little bit on that and explain, perhaps, your rationale when selecting artists that you wanted to work with?

JB – I think the approach I used, well Los Angeles there was a, perhaps I shouldn't say it, but a dominant style, light and space artists, artists using plastics, and I thought there were a lot of other ways to do art. So I encouraged the faculty that we would not hire artists from Los Angeles we would hire artists only from New York or Europe. So there would be other sort of ways of doing art that the students would be exposed to. And then I developed a rigorous visiting artists programme, having artists coming from Europe and New York and they could stay as long as they wanted; a week, a month, whatever. So students really got a lot of exposure to practicing artists, but not from Los Angeles.

HW – So was it a very conscience effort, a conscience decision, to bring in the alien in a way? This isn't what you're going to bump into round the corner, so I'm going to make sure that you're exposed to it. That sounds like an exciting thing for student to be exposed to.

JB – Well yes I think it's important, you know as you mention, I said that I don't think art can be taught, but I think a situation can be created where art might happen, and I think, as part of that, having working, practicing artists around students is a way to start. Students learn art, not just by listening but also by watching. You know you don't know how they're doing it.

HW – Yes, absolutely. In a way it's one of those, one of the dilemmas in talking about

this, I suppose, is the danger of trying to unpick what's going on, the fear that if you come up with a formula....

JB – Yes, here's an example, one of my early students was the artist David Salle. One of the artists I had out was the French artist Daniel Buran. And I said, David, work with Daniel all week, whatever he wants to do, drive him around. You take care of him. You see, I didn't do any teaching there, I just set up a situation where David was going to learn a lot.

HW – I think it's brilliant. We have a, in the school I teach in, we have an unusually large faculty of visual arts for a secondary school, and in a similar kind of way we, being very English, we built the faculty around the idea of it being somebody's job to get in first in the morning and make sure that there's a big pot of tea on the go. And then this idea that conversations happen. When I read that idea that David and Daniel sharing a car, I love the idea that you sort of set up circumstances where you know something is going to happen though you don't necessarily know what that is?

JB – Well that's a very good example of me playing Cupid, I just brought two people together.

HW – And something happens.

JB – Yeah. Well you hope something happens.

HW – As a teacher and artist myself I feel that my role, within the classroom, forces me to continually experiment and explore a wide range of media and approaches. You once said that one of the best things about teaching young artists was that some of them would eventually be your competition and you could get a head start. I wondered how you felt about, having been involved as a teacher for so much of your career, whether that had had a positive effect on the development of your own work and ideas?

JB – I don't think so. I enjoy seeing students succeed, and feeling that I might have had a part in it, in the success, but that's all. No I don't think anything beyond that.

HW – Ok. Your work has often been labelled as conceptual, but you've gone on record as saying that all art is conceptual. And, as you've just mentioned, you've said that you believe one can't teach art. Art education seems to have spent much of the past fifty years struggling to decide whether to teach skills or concepts or perhaps something else. What do you think is the most important thing to teach

someone? Something you think was important that you'd like students to take away?

JB – Well I certainly mentioned that art should be fun, that students should enjoy what they're doing, I mean that would be number one. I think that you can't will to be an artist, I think I said that in that Tom Waits video. You have to be obsessed. You can't will that. And since I don't think art can be taught I really have no central thing to teach.

HW – No. I suppose not, fair enough. Before I went into teaching a friend said to me that I would never make any more art if I became a teacher. On the contrary I have found that teaching art has been the best way to maintain my practice and develop as an artist....

JB – You could come right back and say "if you're gonna do art you'll never teach!"

HW – There is that, of course. I read somewhere that you once described yourself as "a teacher and father first, artist second". I really like the idea that you were making things as an artist despite/inspite/because of these commitments....

JB – That wasn't something where I made choices. I had gotten married, I had children, so I had to be responsible for my children, of course....

HW – Yeah. But history is full of artists who've not done that and I think there's something brilliant about the idea that you described yourself as that but were 100% an artist; making things, continuing to make things, to develop things. There's a kind of, I suppose there's a modesty in the statement but there's also something quite exciting about the idea of making stuff with these commitments and juggling these commitments and I wonder, I mean you've sort of answered this but I'll ask it anyway, when do you think that changed? That description changed? Would it be purely, in the 80's as you said, when suddenly the art market meant that things were going to be a bit easier?

JB – What was it I'd said about supporting my children? What was the quote?

HW – You'd described yourself, I just wondered whether there was a point, was it in the 80's when suddenly the art market shifted that you would change that description, because I think that....

JB – What was the description, tell me again?

HW – You'd said you were a 'Teacher and father first, artist second'.

JB – Yes well the teaching and being a parent were givens, that was my life. I had to teach to support myself, I mean I couldn't be a bum. I had a family. I had to support them, so they were intertwined. So once I was not able to teach I got a little bit, you know the burden was gone. But I've got to say I only thought I never neglected my children for art, at the time, I thought I was doing the best I could.

HW – Yeah. Ok I've got one last question....

JB – But you know if I was in a confessional booth I would have to admit that I always put art first.

HW – Well this is it, isn't it. I have kids too and it's about the balance. But you can't 'not be an artist'. It's there all the time....

JB – Well I think it literally destroyed my marriage. I'm divorced. I think that was one of the reasons. I was just too occupied with art.

HW – Yeah, yeah. Oh well....ok, John, I've got one last question...

JB – Sure.

HW – You've referred to this already, and I think it's an amazing thing, a Youtube sensation, this video. In the brilliant "A Brief History of John Baldessari", narrated by Tom Waits, you said that you thought you might be remembered as the man who put dots on peoples' faces. Your legacy to the art teaching profession, however, is undeniable and you are an incredibly inspiring figure in this field. How do you feel about the prospect of being remembered as a great artist, but also a great teacher?

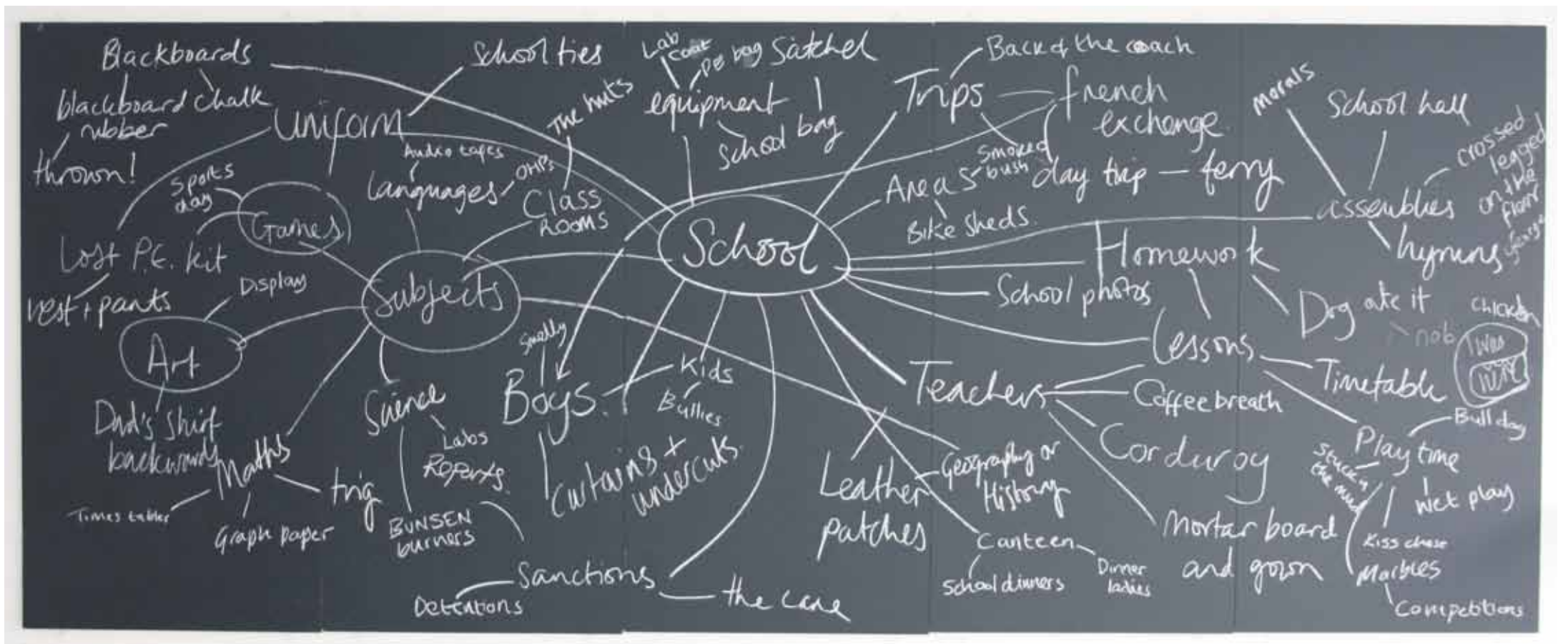
JB – I don't really care about being a great teacher. I just want to be remembered as a great artist.

HW – It's a good answer but I think you will be remembered as both.

JB – Well I hope that my answers have been of use to you?

HW – Yes, thank you very much.

“And since I don't think art can be taught I really have no central thing to teach.”



# School as Gallery

Cassie Hyland

The display of student work, whether it be in a purpose built space, a corridor or temporary display area is vital to any school education. The cliché of school display seen time and time again is fields of sugar-papered display boards with wavy boarders. Pupil's work hung at a funny angle might fit into one person's view of an appropriate display, but I often question if this is the most beneficial use of student work and the school environment.

Our school benefits from a dedicated gallery space. The gallery has evolved over time, originally fabricated with carpet on the floor and used partly as a classroom and partly as an exhibition space. The Gallery was eventually reconfigured, the carpets were ripped out and the Berwick Road Gallery was born. The space has housed an array of exhibitions and events over the past 13 years; Hayward touring shows including Goya, Jake & Dinos Chapman and Peter Blake, collaborative work including a life sized cardboard elephant, built by staff and students, Primary children's work from the art club we run, and a Year 13 final exhibition curated by the students with live music and cocktails at the private view. Berwick Road Gallery has been visited by artists, educators, parents and, most importantly, students.

The gallery space allows students to think, they have to consider the context of their work in relation to their peers and the space itself. We hold private views for each exhibition to give it that 'official' feel. Many of the exhibitions are curated and hung by the teachers, this isn't to say we are removing the student involvement, but for younger students it is a great chance to see their work displayed in a professional environment and also a chance for staff to have informal conversations with their parents.

The Gallery is the heart of our department, quite often where the best conversations are triggered and ideas are born. Using a space that insulates itself from the rest of the school provides an interesting forum, presenting work to a professional standard in the gallery

changes the reading of the work. Our use of the Gallery also changes our reading of how other spaces around the school can be used. If you begin to use the smallest of spaces to display examples of students work inside and outside their classroom, the conversation changes. Display becomes a sense of pride for pupils as well as teachers; quite often it is a way of demonstrating what actually goes on in lessons.

This year we decided to approach the gallery space in a slightly different way by having an exhibition called 'School'. All staff were invited to submit memories, photos and memorabilia about their experience of school. Many chose to supply objects based of their own time in education including school uniforms, text books and school reports. The school archive was trawled for nuggets of the school's history. One item displayed in the exhibition was the staff log book dated 1933. It was written by the Head teacher every day, recording events or notes such absences and even an event involving an unexploded bomb during the Second World War. Pupils and staff who read these anecdotes were not only moved by the descriptions but also formed an understanding of the history of their school. Many pupils were unable to begin to image what life was like and it sparked a series of conversations and questions. We were surprised by the reaction and enthusiasm of the teachers. When the show was finally hung the private view was packed, the community of the school had come together and shared the one thing we all had in common. A realisation that their teachers were once like them, that in fact they were human beings, that they made the same mistakes and broke similar rules.



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REPORT

Name Nina Welling Summer Term 1932  
Age 7.4 Form I  
Average Age 7.10 Absent 4 times

**English**  
Nina's reading, composition and spelling are good but her creative writing will not improve until she learns to concentrate more - she is very easily distracted. Her written work is very neat and tidy work.

**Mathematics**  
Nina is quite able in Mathematics but she does work very slowly. A more thorough knowledge of the times tables would help to increase her output of work.

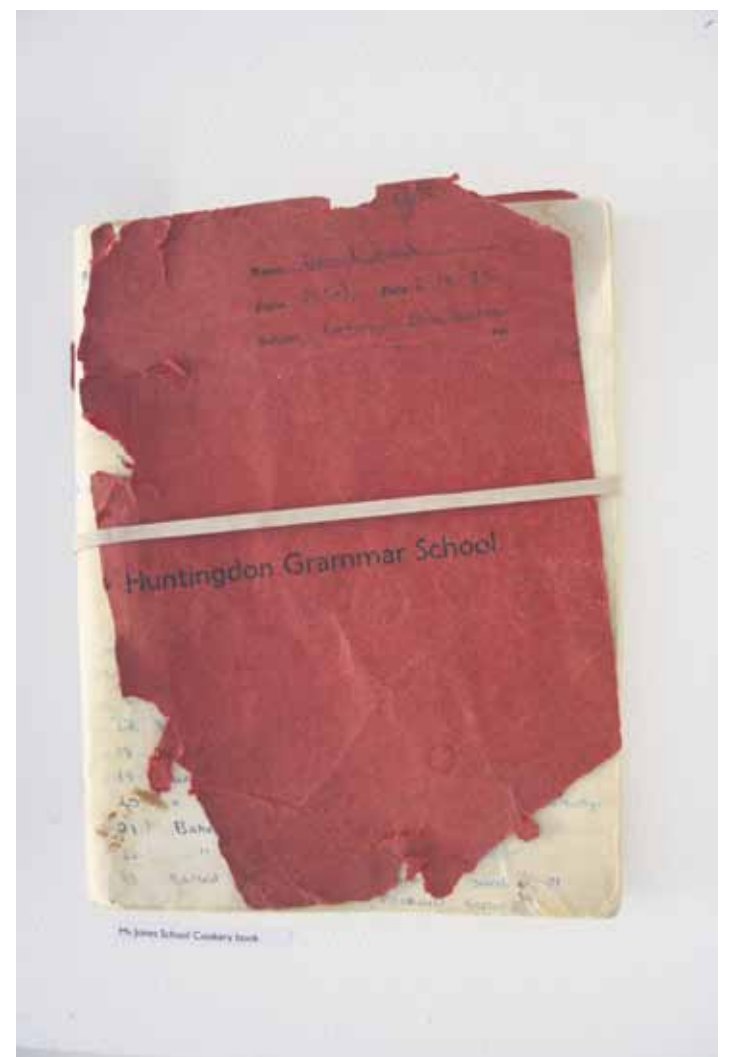
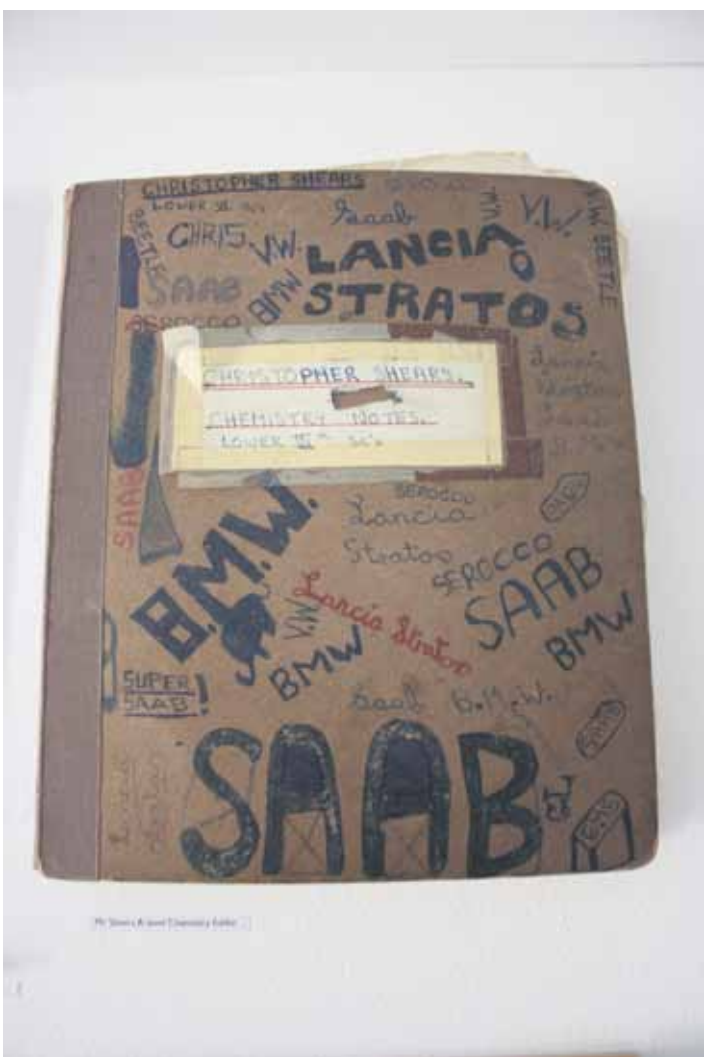
**General Studies**  
On her art work Nina observes and records what she sees very well. Her imaginative work is good. On Nature, Nina's work is very good. It is quickly done and neatly presented.

**Music**  
Nina makes a good effort in Music.

**Physical Education**  
Nina works well in physical education.

**General Remark**  
Nina works hard but she still likes to chatter. She must learn to concentrate for longer periods of time.  
Nina is a very busy and cheerful girl.

*A. Randall* Head Mistress  
This term begins on 10th September and ends on 10th December



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# Memory of education (Art Classrooms)

Layla Fay

I am very aware of the irony by saying this but I don't care much for people who have a closed mind with an open mouth. I'm sure there are many reasons of which traditional education could point out a means of saying that art is irrelevant as a career perspective but quite frankly without opening your minds and immersing yourself in a place like Welling School and the Art lessons it's unfortunate that your thoughts and feelings towards the subject may remain as ancient as the books and educators you learned these morals from. I suppose the ability and capability for forging a monetary based career could be questionable, but what a boring life you must lead if you are to be focused only on richness by the wealth you can only drape yourself in.

For me the art subjects I studied left my mind and self-development more rich and valuable to me than I could have ever imagined. I really could go on forever but art for me isn't a method of finding meaning, it is a means of finding a way to create and express the thoughts behind these means by your own making. It is a method of learning how to learn in a way that is so enjoyable, and you really can be as selfish as you like. It helped me through some of the most difficult times. Without studying an Art subject I would have never had the creative freedom to discover the things I love about learning, or to discover

Linguistics which I love studying also. I feel that if schools allowed children to truly indulge in Art the way I was lucky enough to do so, they could shape themselves as creative learners and find ways of learning which could benefit them so well in their other subjects. It's a way of practising your artistic study which in turn enriches your education so much; depending on how much freedom you allow yourself.

My education so far has made me realise that the best feeling I have experienced is that "penny drop" moment when an idea materializes in your mind and fizzes like a volcanic explosion of thought. Everything I hold dearest to me has a conceptual meaning behind it as opposed to its actual monetary value. In this respect my most treasured possessions are my memories and the words that are held behind them. I love the way that letters look; I love typography; I love words and their functions in creating. Also, the beauty behind words is just as important as how they are presented typographically: "the black space can never be beautiful until the white space is beautiful". For this reason I find nothing more endearing than hand written gestures. I actually have a penchant for keeping the envelopes on which people have written my name, or a greeting or message simply because for that moment you know that those words have been with you

in mind. I have a collection of birthday card envelopes larger than the cards themselves and I have always kept my envelope from which held the note inside revealing that I had won the Altturnertive prize.

Apologies for rambling but this overflow of thought and disregard for structure is an exact metaphor for the way my mind works when it pieces together a memory which I am excited to talk about. I loved my art lessons, but I was always one or the other. Either immersed gluttonously in an idea which I hunger to indulge in or I am famished, bored and frustrated when I can't find inspiration to set myself racing off in a new direction. I remember those art classrooms – it was a strange sort of smell depending on what kind of lesson had just occurred (or what year group, for that matter, for example the toxic, overpowering, flowery, sugary sweet scent of year nines marinating themselves in a sea of perfume and face powder was a strong contributing factor) – but I remember particularly one of the downstairs rooms which smelled like a mixture of dried paint, earthy clay, wood and paper and that wonderful old book smell. I remember it being cold and smelling of rain on the rainy days when everyone had got drenched; or the unbearable, uncomfortable heat in the summer when I could usually smell the sinks

and all the "not art" that had found itself down the drains.

I loved the way my educators had such individuality and vibrance in assonance to their own teaching styles. The way their rooms reflected them and how every surface was someone's artwork. I loved the way there was never a neat desk in sight – in fairness there's probably tables somewhere which still bear scars of the attacks on my sketchbook. When I finally left the school, I felt like my sketchbooks and work I had produced over the years should remain there: that's where they were at home and I felt wrong to take them away. I live my life like one of my sketchbooks now. Haphazard, layered and bursting at the seams with ideas thanks to the people in the art department who taught and inspired me. Roots from each subject I studied and lessons by different teachers entwined to allow me to grow into a direction of further study. I decided not to study an Art at university for many reasons, but truthfully I don't think I could have ever gained more enjoyment somewhere else than the way I was taught at my school. I think the likelihood of my future path not merging with the experiences gained through my creative practices are as impossible for me as it is to find a clean sink in a classroom and for that, I am truly thankful.

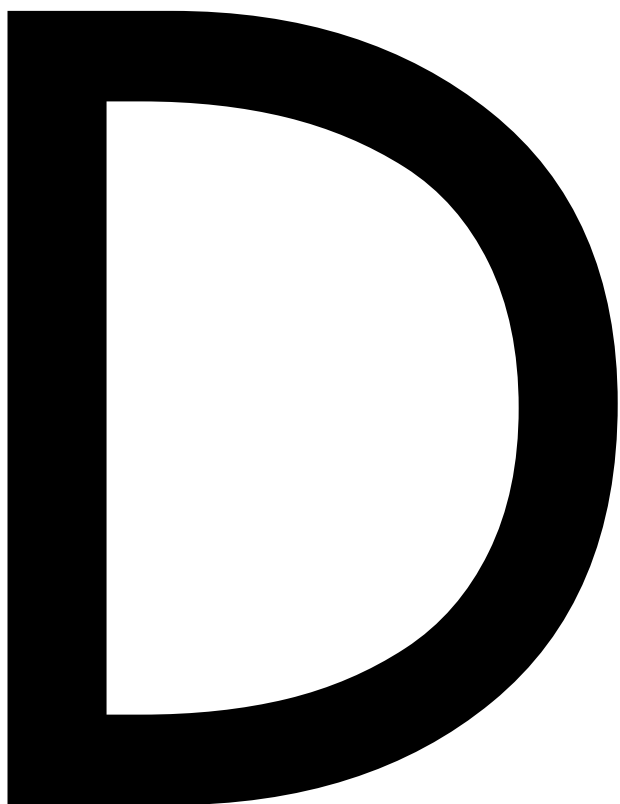
# Handy Cut Out and Keep Guide to Teaching

Look back as well as forward.

Teach through art that asks you questions rather than gives you answers.



Create lessons and schemes of work that refer to no artists at all.



Practice what you teach.

Install a blackboard in your staff room or paint the wall with blackboard paint. Don't mention to anyone that this new addition has anything to do with art and education. Make sure to leave a supply of chalk close by and watch others contribute and collaborate. Document weekly.

Display things differently. Set up a plinth or a gold frame in your room and show a different piece each week. Use this to start conversations.

Create a "Swipe File" to collect ideas and influences, somewhere that you can just put stuff. This "File" could be a folder, a sketchbook, a box or "memory bucket" service like Evernote. This archive of material is useful in the times where you are stuck for inspiration; all you need to do is dig around the folder, process and make new connections.



60 minute exhibition. Give each student a random word and one hour to create a piece of resolved work and exhibit it.

Contribute your own advice to others #aetips



See as many exhibitions  
as is humanly possible.

Your  
classroom  
is your studio.

Observe how other  
people work.

Have/don't  
have a  
social life.  
(delete as appropriate)

**DO  
SOMETHING,  
TALK ABOUT  
IT, DO IT  
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SOMETHING  
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categorise it in a number  
of different ways.



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sculpture  
challenge.

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their materials for a piece of sculpture.

They must spend no more than £1.

Teach possibilities  
not facts.

# The Sketchbook as Self Portrait

Andee Collard

The sketchbook is an intensely personal document of the individual; it details their preferences, their abilities and their obsessions. Sketchbooks are a record of the artist's intentions and aspirations. Over the course of his career Picasso produced 178 sketchbooks, filled with iterations and innovations. He altered the label of one of his sketchbooks to read: "Je suis le cahier". Literally translated it means "I am the exercise book". Sketchbooks are inherently a self-portrait of their creator, a collection of them reads as an autobiography mapping out the genealogy of their lives and their work. In psychology Influencing Machines<sup>i</sup> are fictional devices invented by the mentally ill to justify their affliction. Sometimes these devices are thought to be their doubles. Sketchbooks are the artist's Influencing Machine, able to decode and justify the intentions of the user. Sketchbooks have a unique place in art making, they are a Rosetta Stone, in Picasso's case providing further evidence of the innumerable iterations and explorations undertaken in his work.

Behind any creative work there is usually a plethora of working drawings, ideas, collage, clippings and scribbled notations. Most artists maintain a sketchbook to experiment with and record the world around them. The word Sketchbook is a catch all term that encompasses many approaches; Lawrence Weiner's objectively put together ring binders of plans; John Chamberlain's "sketches" included crushed cigarette packs as maquettes for his sculptures; Cindy Sherman's wonderfully nostalgic and prophetic "A Cindy Book". Sketchbooks don't conform to stereotype and aren't meant to be catalogues in perfection, but rather a document of time spent making,

engaging and thinking. The challenges faced by a novice are the same as those further established. Both artists start with a tabula rasa, the challenge is to fill this blank slate with your distinct take on the world.

Throughout her life Virginia Woolf kept a diary as "a method of practicing or trying out the art of writing"<sup>ii</sup>. In a similar way many artist's sketchbooks work as supportive frameworks to allow the fermentation and evolution of their practice. Sturgeon's law dictates, "ninety percent of everything is crap"<sup>iii</sup>. The work recorded in sketchbooks can't be perfect all of the time and it is important for everyone to explore this. Having a mature sketchbook practice is a lot about creating a system for dealing with the absolute disaster pages. Choosing the right 10 percent is very important. Good sketchbooks provide evidence that good ideas, drawings and work existed and that bad ones are supported and nurtured as part of the process.

At Welling we encourage the intense documentation of the creative process through the use of sketchbooks. This approach is modelled through staff and students using sketchbooks in the planning, execution and recording of lessons. These documents our working process tells the story of the happy accident, an abandoned experiment and the origin of creative solutions. In the digital era sketchbooks could be seen as relatively anachronistic, online services and social networks provide much of the "Scrapbooking" functionality to collect and process influences, resources and feedback. Our use of sketchbooks persists in the face of the homogeneity of the

digital world, occasionally borrowing from it, but otherwise presenting a truly individual take on the world. I love to look at the chameleon like changes a sketchbook goes through as it is used. I am particularly influenced by the way that students approach the same tasks that I encounter in my own practice. I taught a student 4 years ago who engaged in a really strange practice at various times during projects. Grace would systematically go through all of her books and photocopy pages that she could see the grain of an idea in. Grace would then take all of the photocopies and collage them into her current sketchbook and start annotating and developing new ideas based on her own work. This self-cannibalisation turned out to be hugely productive and as a result "The Grace Hodder" method is now part of Welling folklore and used by numerous staff and students.

I often think about the sketchbook as an outboard brain, one that I am able to look at and notice patterns and themes. A sketchbook is an aide memoir, reminding the artist of their own obsessions and agendas, detailing where they have come from in their own origin story. Therefore it is vital to record fleeting ideas or experiences in your sketchbook. By collecting disparate pieces together you allow the opportunity for an idea to ferment. I think making your own "Influencing Machine" is a profound thing to do. My own practice is influenced by student's take on the world. How they appropriate ideas and find their own techniques to deal with the creative process. I hope that this influence extends to a kind of virtuous circle. After thinking about things like Grace's approach, I have in turn started

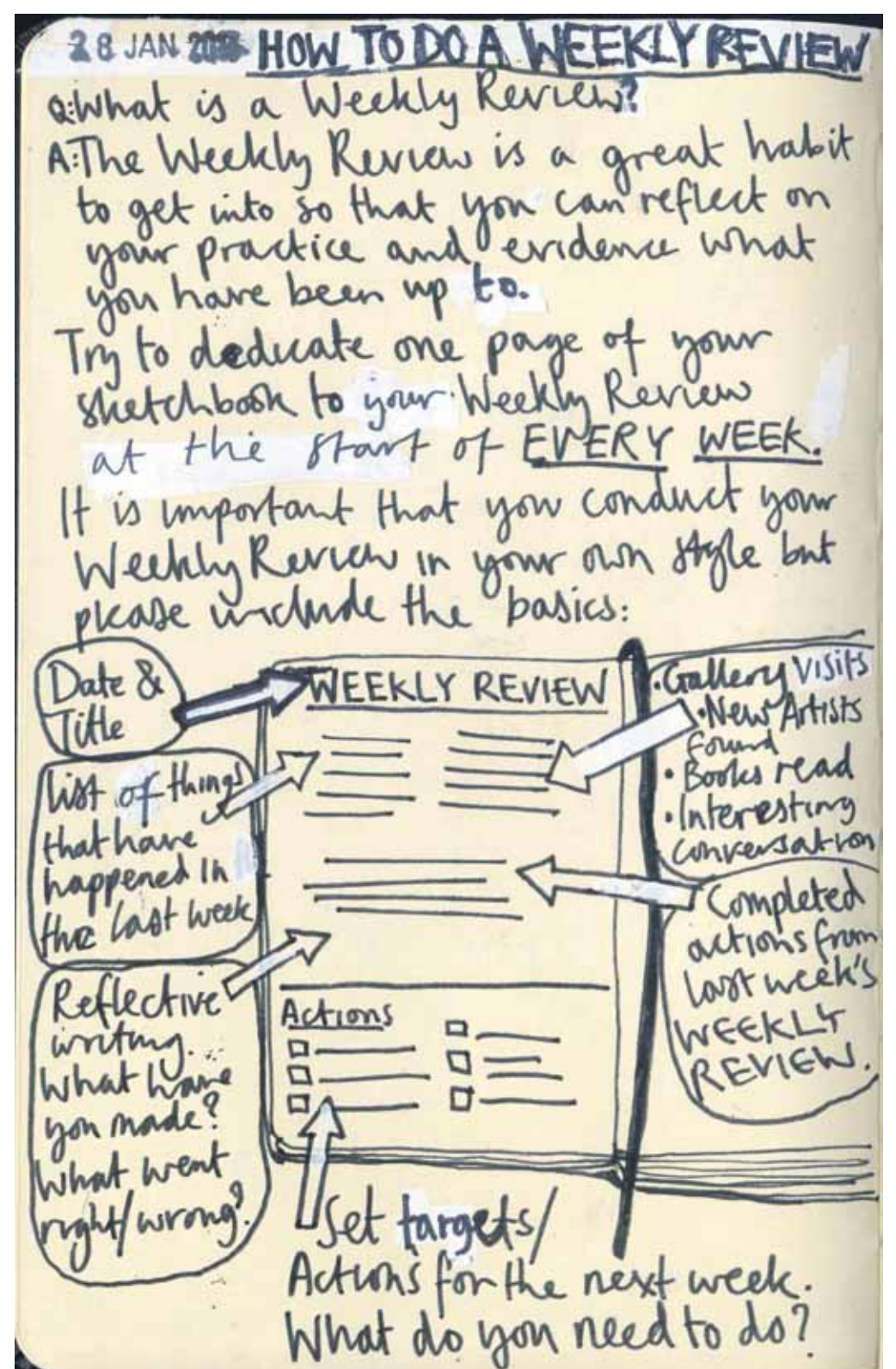
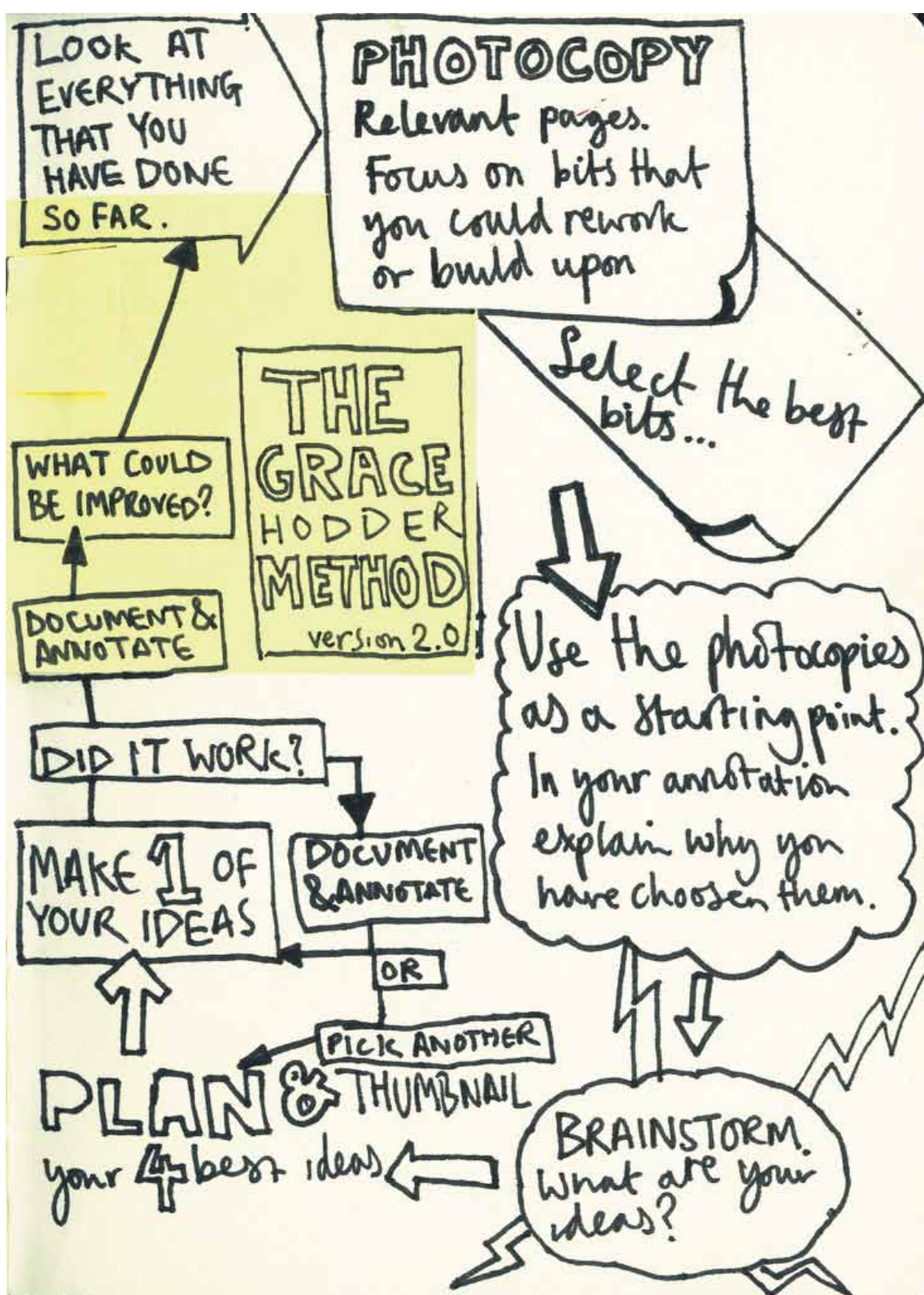
a weekly review of the work that I have made and the work that I want to make, this practice has in turn been adopted by students, and I look forward to them putting their own stamp on it and using it as a foundation for future developments. As Virginia Woolf surmises in her diary (Sketchbook)-"If I stopped and took thought, it would never be written at all; and the advantage of the method is that it sweeps up accidentally several stray matters which I should exclude if I hesitated, but which are the diamonds of the dust heap"<sup>iv</sup>. We must continue to define ourselves and in turn collect the diamonds of our creative practice.

<sup>i</sup> "On the Origin of the 'Influencing Machine' in Schizophrenia" is an article written by psychoanalyst Viktor Tausk. It was first published in 1919 in the journal *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*. The paper describes Tausk's observations and psychoanalytic interpretation of a type of paranoid delusion that occurs in patients diagnosed with schizophrenia. The delusion often involves their being influenced by a 'diabolical machine', just outside the technical understanding of the victim, that influences them from afar.

<sup>ii</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*. Mariner Books, 2003

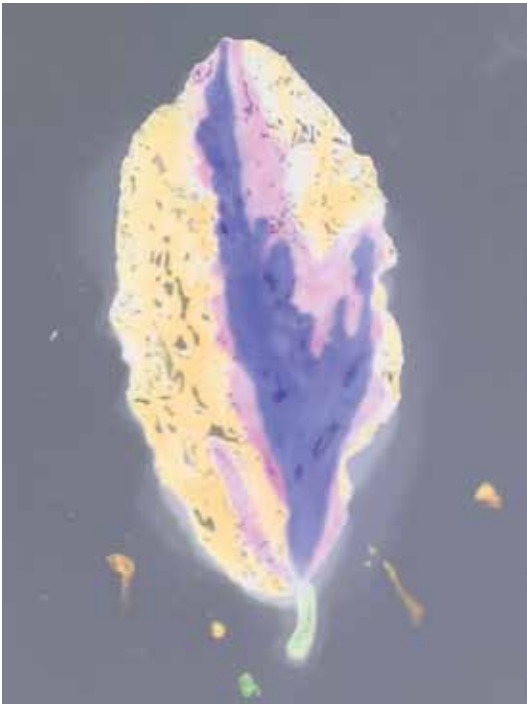
<sup>iii</sup> Sturgeon's revelation, commonly referred to as Sturgeon's law, is an adage commonly cited as "ninety percent of everything is crap." It is derived from quotations by Theodore Sturgeon, an American science fiction author: while Sturgeon coined another adage that he termed "Sturgeon's law", it is his "revelation" that is usually referred to by that term. The phrase was derived from Sturgeon's observation that while science fiction was often derided for its low quality by critics, it could be noted that the majority of examples of works in other fields could equally be seen to be of low quality and that science fiction was thus no different in that regard to other art.

<sup>iv</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary*. Mariner Books, 2003





Docendo Discimus  
(Teach in order to learn)  
Nicholas Lockyer



Hannah Hebouche



John Coulter-Liston



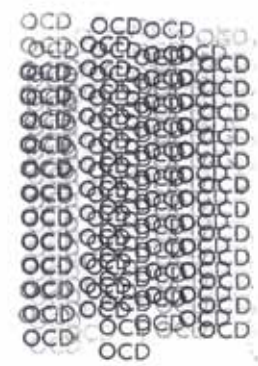
Louise Taylor



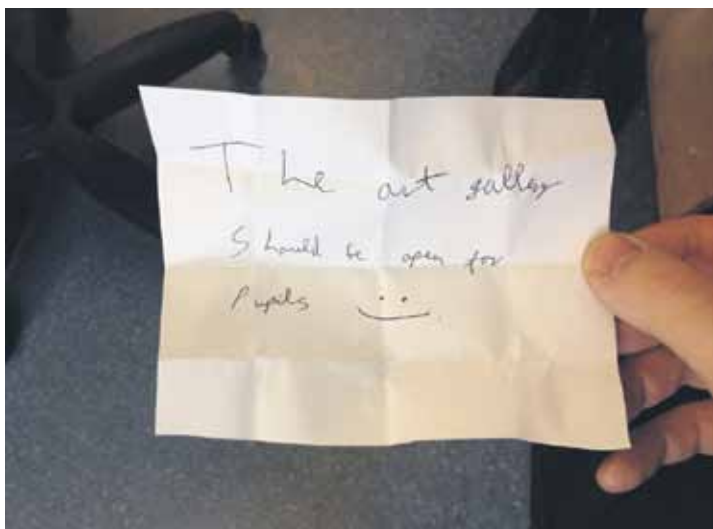
Charlotte Busuttill



Joseph Cartwright



Emily Hills



Document of lesson activity



Sarah Stirling



Jessica To

Welling School has been using the photo-sharing website flickr since 2006. The wellwellwell group, Initiated by Andy Berriman, then Head of Faculty, quickly grew into a cross discipline space to document the successes and failures of students, staff and alumni. Continuing to evolve the group page provides a literal snap shot of the faculties' current interests and obsessions.

[flickr.com/groups/wellwellwell/](https://www.flickr.com/groups/wellwellwell/)



Document of lesson activity



Lewis Dowsett



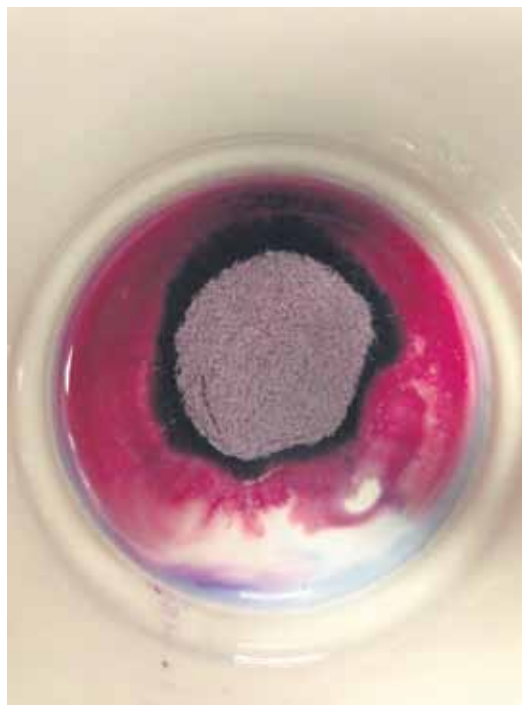
Jasmine Lecomber



Phil Scott



Jon Purday



Tamsin Wildy



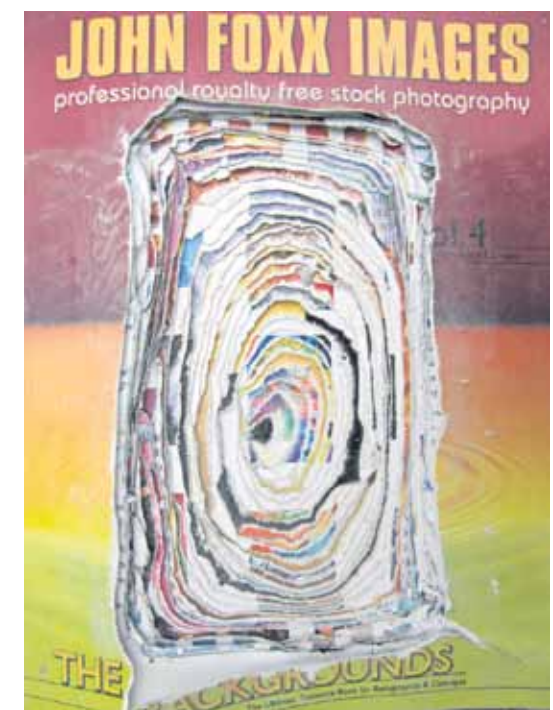
Document of lesson activity



Zoe Florey



Laura Lloyd



Holly Gibson



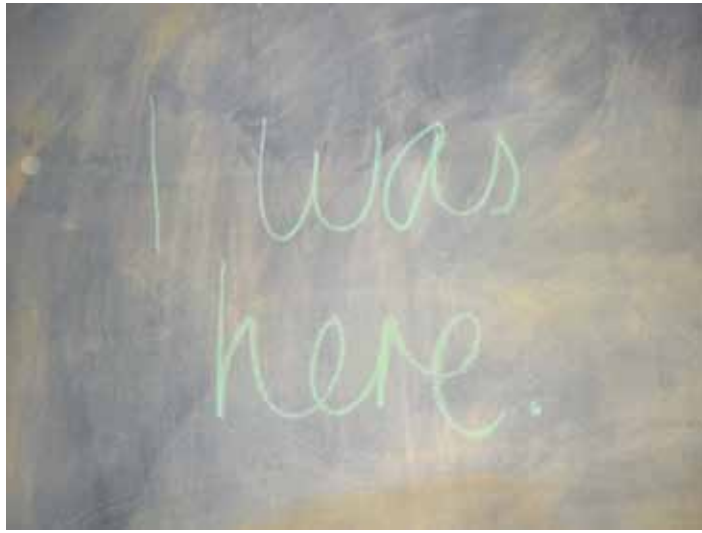
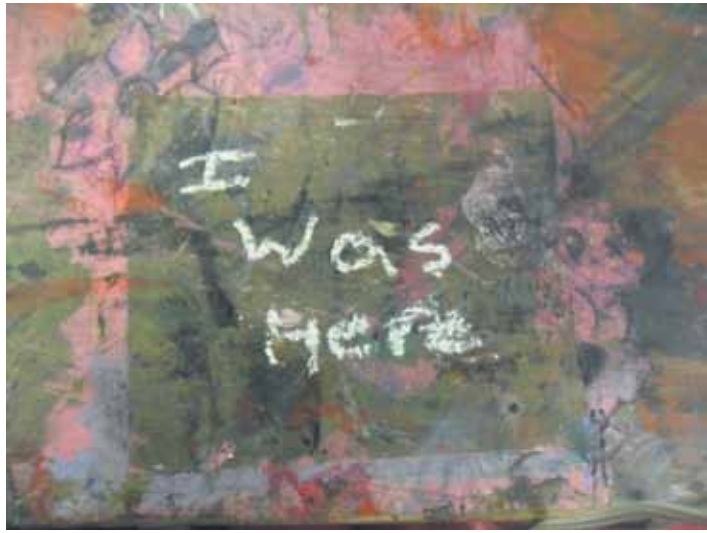
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Document of lesson activity



Sophie Francis



Samira Ahmed

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# Grumpy Kid

Jack Glidewell

I spent much of my time at school known as the "grumpy kid".

One of the first things I remember about secondary school is the sheer size in comparison to that of a primary: the building; the canteen; and especially the students. Even being one of the taller students I felt microscopic in comparison to the older years, I was frightened.

My fondest experiences have been the trips with teachers where all boundaries seem to be removed. In 2012 I went to New York, where we found ourselves stuck in the middle of Hurricane Sandy. It disrupted all our plans: visiting Liberty Island, Ellis Island and returning home were no longer optional; but during this time we bonded with teachers, exchanging gossip about the school (for staff and students). This was a strange experience because, as a student, I never really pictured teachers like this: As normal human beings.

Possibly the greatest thing I've learnt at secondary school is how everything changes and how to get used to it. Still, something about school drove me psychotic ..... until recently. Now I am discovering, as I think every student does when they reach the final few months of school, despite the seemingly endless torture, it is the one thing that we wish didn't have to finish. When parents use the cliché that "school is the best days of your lives", they may actually be on to something.



# A Conversation Between Jeremy Deller and Henry Ward

HW – I understand that when you were 13 your own art teacher moved you out of art and into a pottery class and then you went on to study a degree in art history, so I wondered if you could say a little bit about your own art education, how would you describe it?

JD – There wasn't any. It didn't happen.

HW – Didn't happen at all?

JD – Maybe I was 12. It was second or first year, as we called it. Maybe first year. It was very quickly. I was moved out of traditional art making into pottery.

HW – What were the reasons?

JD – Because I didn't get on with the teacher, he was incredibly anally retentive. Super anally retentive. The first thing he wanted us to do was to draw the dried out roots of a cactus, the first term was more or less spent doping that. The second term was spent drawing a maize, which was the equivalent of what we'd done in the first term. So that was his idea of teaching. Teaching an eleven-year old art. It just killed it really.

HW – So how did you feel about it? It was the teacher's choice to move you out and into pottery?

JD – It was really good. Pottery was fun. The teacher was really nice.

HW – Did you stop pottery when you started O Levels then?

JD – I can't remember. I probably did it for a year then that was it.

HW – So what led you to go on and study art history, because there was obviously an interest there?

JD – I liked art. I liked museums. I spent a lot of my spare time, well not a lot, but I liked museums and art galleries. My dad used to take me. I liked history and I liked art. So for me art history seemed like the right thing to do. It was an extra A Level, it wasn't on the curriculum, you had to do it in addition to other things. But I wanted to do it. Weirdly enough the art master, who didn't like me at all, tried to prevent me doing art history because he didn't think I was clever enough to do it. So he still had it in for me even four years afterwards.

HW – Ok, so have you been involved in any teaching yourself and if so what context?

JD – I do the odd talk at art colleges, I don't do tutorials anymore, or whatever they're called. I spent a year in California where I was teaching at an art college but it wasn't really teaching it was just talking and hanging around really. My experience of teaching is very narrow.

HW – That's an interesting thing that you've said there about it not really being teaching it was just talking and hanging around. I watched a documentary about John Baldessari recently where some of his ex-students were talking about a Baldessari class being people hanging around and talking about stuff....

JD – And going on visits. We used to go on visits and look at stuff that I was interested in, so I'd involve the students in my own research, trying to kill two birds with one stone.

HW – That touches on quite a lot of the areas I am interested in. This idea that potentially good teaching is also a kind of practice in that way...

JD – It's showing isn't it?

HW – Yes....and involving.

JD – Showing and, exactly, involving. So I did that. I showed and involved but I didn't really teach. I didn't know enough to teach.

HW – What do you think teaching is then?

JD – It depends how old the person is that you have in front of you. How many of them there are. Because it can be the old fashioned.... you know if you are doing maths then you probably do have to teach. Maybe if you're doing art, or art history, perhaps it's different. But I can't define it. Just helping people learn and be interested in things.

HW – So much of your practice has a socially engaged element. How important is the audience when you're developing projects? Are you aware of a specific audience or do you develop things and then an audience comes along?

JD – I'm aware of it. I want there to be an audience. There's different works. Some works there are just people looking at stuff, with other work it is people being part of the work or being involved more actively in it. I don't do that all the time, I do that some of the time. I mean some artists, that is all they do. I do loads of different things; I make a film – the audience there is someone just sitting down watching the film. It's very passive. For me there's a whole range of audiences, and what I require of them, so there's no single audience as such. I'm probably known better for works where I am involving people but it's not all I've done. I wouldn't be able to do that all the time.

HW – So there's a broad range to your practice? You might be doing things that need no audience at all or may possibly have no audience and then other things that have a specific.....

JD – Where the audience and the art work are the same thing or where people are taking part, are a part of the work. There's many different shades.

HW – I've read somewhere that "Acid Brass" was the first time you realised the importance of working with a group of people to make something collaboratively, and I like the quote of yours that says you "went from an artist who makes things happen", which I really like. What is it, do you think, that makes what you do 'art'?

JD – Because no one else would do it if they weren't an artist. A lot of those things would never have happened. Like "The Battle of Orgreave". It might have happened by now

but it would never have happened then. The fact it was me doing it meant it was allowed to happen, so that's probably why. Why is it art?

HW – Yes, why is it art?

JD – Because it wouldn't have happened otherwise if an artist hadn't suggested it. It wouldn't have happened in that way.

HW – Do you think that there's an argument that, like you were saying, it's difficult to define what teaching was and then you can pick out things that are ostensibly recognised as teaching but perhaps it is a lot of other things too? There's a similarity there in that if someone makes a painting and puts it on the wall people say "yes that's art" but there is also a sense that there is a lot of stuff that isn't very definable because it doesn't fit anywhere else and ends up being the remit of the artist?

JD – Exactly. So that's a very good comparison. Also just because it is a painting doesn't make it art but people assume it is because it's 'a painting'. Art is an in-definable quality that a painting may, or may not, have. Like the business around the fourth plinth when I was applying for that; You look at all the sculptures on the other plinths around Trafalgar Square, or anywhere around London, and there not necessarily art but they are sculptures. To be art you have to have an extra edge to it, a quality to it.

HW – This is something I have thought quite a lot about recently. The idea that there might be a period in history where the reason for making things shifts. People have always made things, but like you say about the sculptures around Trafalgar Square they are constructed in a way that you might associate with an artist but at the same time they're not art. Do you think there is a point where the reason for making things shifted? Maybe there were people making things for other reasons but not recognised as artists at that point and then the definition of art shifts or blurs and now we are in a period where other things are recognised as art. It was 2004 that you won the Turner Prize?

JD – Yes.

HW – Around the time there was a lot of press about whether you were even an artist.

JD – There was a bit of that but you get that all the time.

HW – But now people don't question it as much. What you're doing is much more acceptable.

JD – They were more excited by the fact that I hadn't done art at school. I wouldn't do an interview the next day on Radio 4 because I couldn't be bothered to get up early in the morning as I realised it was going to be a very late night, and it would have ruined my evening knowing I had to get up and be live on the radio with John Humphries. So because they couldn't get me the only thing they could dig up was talking to the Headmaster of my school. He wasn't Headmaster while I was there. So he went on the radio and talked about my academic career at school and the fact I

hadn't done art. That was the best they could do. It was pathetic. I couldn't believe someone from school would do that. It was twenty years ago and he was talking about me as though he knew me. I wasn't awake at the time but apparently that was what was going on. He was talking about my O level results and my A level results. It's probably confidential to do that, to discuss a student's academic record. I think the media are much more at ease now with art and artists. I think if it is interesting it doesn't really matter if it's art or not it's just something that is interesting. Something they can talk about. It's when shit is called art. That's the problem, and they think it is crap.

HW – Ok. I understand that you first started working collaboratively in 1993, initially with Alan Kane and Simon Perriton.....

JD – Yes

HW – And then more recently with people like Ed Hall, who made our NUT banner that I've marched behind a few times.....

JD – Did he? Oh that's good. Have you met him?

HW – I've never met him, no, but I've marched behind that banner a few times.

JD – Well Ed makes about 40% of all the trade union banners in Britain, if not more. That march last week, hundreds of his banners. Literally hundreds.

HW – It's amazing. I wondered if you could explain a little bit about why you think collaborating is important and also say something about how it is that you end up working with certain people?

JD – Well I mean it's important because on a very basic selfish level I can't make things, I can't make banners or do these amazing things that people do, so I need those people. I need a banner, or I need those skills. So it's a very practical thing. Also I like working with people, I like being with people who have talents like that, being around them, talking to them, getting to know them. It's a social thing. It's a practical and a social thing. And usually you're attracted to certain people because of what they do and you hope that you'll like them as people as well. So Ed is probably the biggest example of that. He's an amazing great person. Did you see the documentary, BBC, The Culture Show?

HW – Yes, that involved you being chased by little bats at your old primary school?

JD – Yes, Ed's on that film.....

HW – In his shed....

JD – It's a garage actually. You get the impression of him there I think, he's a lovely lovely person. So he is someone I work with. He's incredibly efficient and reliable. If I rang him today and said I need a banner by Wednesday that has this on it, these words, he'd just say 'OK' and he'd have it. 'I deliver it, I'll bring it up on my motorbike.'

HW – So does it work like that in that you have an idea and you think “I need a brass band for that idea”, or “I need somebody who makes trade union banners” and then you go and find out who this person is.....

JD – You find them....

HW – Would it ever work the other way around? Would you meet someone, or have you met someone, and thought; they do that.....

JD – Yes, a bit of both. A bit of both. You meet someone and they’re doing something really great and it sparks something off or you’ve been thinking about something similar to something they’re doing, their talents, their music or whatever, you just take it from there. On the whole it’s quite an organic process. Ed’s a great guy. It’s been great working with him. I’ve been working with him for years now. 1999 I think I first really got to know him....

HW – Which is a long time.

JD – Yes.

HW – I see teaching as having the potential to operate as a collaborative artistic practice. There seem to be a lot of parallels between education and much of the things you do in your own work....

JD – Yes.

HW – Do you see what you do as having an educative aspect to it?

JD – A little bit. As much as.....a lot of art. I mean some of the work I do is very educational with a small ‘e’ or even a big ‘E’. For example the show at the Hayward had the film about the miners’ strike and it had the research room and that was basically making people aware of the background to the film they were going to see, and also the performance that I did, but really about the strike itself. Especially for people of a certain age who really don’t know much about it. So it was a way of preparing. Also putting a lot of material up on the walls, priming people. So yes.

HW – So what about things like the car that you took.....

JD – Again that’s another one. But that was open ended because we were really unsure what we were going to say to people or what they were going to get out of it, who we were going to meet, their reactions. So we weren’t being very didactic. I mean the act itself was but in terms of what we were doing on the road it was pretty low key. But yes obviously; showing something. You talk about education being showing people things. That was definitely showing something., an object, to the public; the American public.

HW – It’s one of the things, I do quite a lot of work with education departments in museums and galleries , and I always find it interesting that the education department is like a little room on the edge of the gallery and quite often there’s a lot of politics between what goes on in the curatorial team and the education team and yet, actually, it is all the same thing. I mean this is about people placing things in spaces, or doing things in certain contexts, yet there seems to be this conflict between the two areas. But, particularly with a practice like yours, there is so much overlap.....

JD – Yes.

HW – The very best of teaching is doing a similar sort of thing. I’m interested in whether you see it like that? Socially engaged practice is quite educational.

JD – Potentially. There are different ways of doing it though. I mean, a lot of that work I don’t really like. It’s so obviously trying to ‘do something’. Trying to achieve something at the end of it that will make everyone feel happy. It’s like all those TV programmes that you get. I mean now TV has become socially engaged, every other show seems to be about going into a workplace and transforming people’s lives by cooking or music or.....

HW – Yes.

JD – Like there’s that thing, “The Choir”, going into workplaces. It’s all these stories. I’m just

not interested. Telly has basically taken over where artists started doing stuff. But it does it in a really sentimental way. Without any edge really, I don’t think. I’ve stopped doing things that, maybe, have that element to it. So often you’d be approached by someone, like a museum or a council, we’d love you to work with a group of these people, make an artwork with them, usually asylum seekers or people with behavioural problems, it was very set...

HW – It’s going to tick a box?

JD – Yes. You do this and in the end you do this. Then that’s it, you get £5000 or whatever. I never did them. I was asked to but there are artists who do. They just go from one project to another. But I’m not interested in it.

HW – So what’s interesting there is that you said with the car touring piece that it was open ended? It sounds like you’re more interested in projects where you don’t really know where it’s going to go. In how it might manifest itself?

JD – Well it’s like a journey. I mean the journey itself was a metaphor for that. You are on a journey and you’re not totally sure of your route but you know you’re going to end up at this place, you hope, in one piece. But you’re not sure. So yes the car, the whole process, was a bit like that. It’s slightly random. When you pitch something out in the public arena in America, or anywhere, it’s totally random. You have no control over who’s going to come up to you or say something and I really like that. It gave it an edge. I’m not sure whether a lot of socially engaged art has an edge or not. I think, in a way, it tries to tie things up in a neat package at the end. Mine was more; I’m doing something and see what happens...

HW – Yes, well I think the problem with a lot of what you’re criticising there is where it does have an agenda at the beginning. Like you were saying, you have to work with this group of people and we need this outcome by this date....

JD – And then we want a report at the end of it. I don’t know if that stuff goes on but I’m sure it does. Maybe the money isn’t around for it anymore?

HW – Well it’s certainly being stripped back.

JD – Because that’s like the education departments of a lot of museums. Always asking you to, well not always, but keen for me to do stuff like that with groups from various deprived areas.

HW – Do you think art does have a social role to play?

JD – It always has. It’s not a new thing. It’s always had a social role. So yes, from cave paintings onwards.

HW – Ok.

JD – And it has an anti-social role as well.

HW – That’s interesting. Could you expand on that a little bit?

JD – Well it’s meant to be annoying. And to wind people up, to get people angry. It’s not just for making people happy. To make them angry about things.

HW – What are you more drawn to? Or are you drawn to both?

JD – Maybe together. Trying to make social and anti-social work at the same time. So the miners’ strike thing is social and anti-social the car is social and anti-social, even folk archive had an anti-social element to it. My procession I did in Manchester was a bit anti-social because of the people I got involved in it. So yes, that’s good.

HW – I’m interested in the way that a lot of your work blurs definitions of art, in the sense that it embraces things like curatorship as much as traditional art practice. You said at the beginning about your interest in art came out of an interest in history and museums and that side of it. You’ve touched on this a bit, but could you try and define what it is that you do?

JD – No.

HW – Fair enough.

JD – I don’t really want to think about it. Because as soon as I start thinking about it, it might stop happening.

HW – Yes, ok. That’s good.

JD – It’s like riding a bike, you don’t think about how it’s working, swimming....

HW – Running upstairs?

JD – It’s just working.

HW – Given the prevailing political climate and the fact that we seem to be, well we are, under a government at the moment who have a very anti-arts view, do you think that art should continue to be taught in schools, and, if so, why?

JD – Well of course it should. Kids like it. And it’s good for you. You should talk to Bob & Roberta Smith. You should talk to Patrick, he has this whole thing about Michael Gove, he’s obsessed with him, with the changes he’s making to the syllabus, that art will be taken off being a core subject. He’s totally against this, obviously, as he should be. As we all should be. But he knows more about it than me.

HW – But given your own, what sounds like an, unpleasant experience of art at school...

JD – Well it wasn’t even unpleasant. It was non-existent.

HW – Yes.

JD – Well I was lucky because I went to museums and all that stuff so I got an education through that.

HW – Ok. Much of your practice seems to reflect your varied interests from the Miners’ Strike to bats via wrestling and The Manic Street Preachers, do you make work about things that already interest you or do you end up finding an interest in the things you are making work about?

JD – The first. I wouldn’t have made it, or started it, if I wasn’t interested in it. But your interests change and develop. But I’m not going to go out and make something about cooking for example....

HW – You’re not interested in cooking?

JD – No. Or, I don’t know, rugby. It’s just not going to happen.

HW – So, you’ve got an interest in something, you have a passion....

JD – Well I’m lucky. I can do what I like, more or less, as an artist. I suppose. I can ring up someone, talk to a director from a gallery, a curator and say “look , I want to do this thing”. And they’ll say “alright then let’s try and do it”. So I don’t have to choose or pick things because I need the work or whatever or apply for things, on the whole. I apply for some things. So I can do what I like, and there are not many artists in that position, or not many artists doing the kind of thing I do. So I’m pretty lucky.

HW – Thank you. Well that’s all my questions.

JD – Is that it? Right.

HW – Thank you very much. Much appreciated.

JD – That’s ok.



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